

# Hazlitt, Balko, “Private Sector”



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*“Finding the Challenges” is an original column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena. Archived columns can be found here. FTC-only RSS feed available here.*

It never hurts to revisit the classics, so we will do a brief refresher on Henry Hazlitt’s *Economics in One Lesson*. That’s right, it’s holding up for yet another year. And this time we will shine a voluntaryist light on the lesson. Next, it never hurts to drape extravagant praise on a new book when it is as good and timely as Radley Balko’s opus, *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America’s Police Forces*, and to urge you to read it. Will we ever be protected and served again? Then we will finish by looking at the so-called “private sector,” a misleading propaganda creation of the state.

## Revisiting Hazlitt’s Simple Lesson

You only have to read a paragraph or so, on a page or so, to think just a bit, to get it. Henry Hazlitt’s *Economics in One Lesson: The Shortest and Surest Way to Understand Basic Economics* is satisfyingly true to its boastful title. But the whole book is full of excellent insights and compelling anecdotes. I wholeheartedly recommend it to any voluntaryist, without reservation. You can read Lew Rockwell’s biography of Henry Hazlitt (1894-1993) at Mises.org, or you can get a free download of the entire book in PDF format at the same web site.

Spoiler Alert! Here is Hazlitt’s simple lesson:

*The art of economics consists in looking not merely at the immediate but at the longer effects of any act or policy; it consists in tracing the consequences of that policy not merely for one group but for all groups.*

The book is full of Hazlitt's evidence to support his hypothesis, so I will not re-argue it. I will merely say that if any reader here can come up with any information that would gainsay the lesson, I would love to see it. There is an email link above and a comment section below. The only reason that one might add a grain of salt is because Hazlitt had all of the Rooseveltian New Deal to draw on for anecdotes, so perhaps he had an unfair advantage. It is with some emphatic insistence, however, that "the lesson" is offered here as timeless wisdom. And it is again that I invite anyone to prove otherwise.

But think of the lesson in terms of your own voluntarism. Do you, like politicians, consider only the short goal? Do you consider only the A goal of any action? Do you live in a dream world where you believe in cannibalizing your own support and living a lie? Do you joke off camera, and hopefully, off mike, about how stupid are those who believe you. Then, do you totally dismiss people (eg. non-voters) who are not your people?

I know your answer to all of those questions is "no!" Otherwise, you would not even be reading a voluntarist web site. You would not see life as a whole, where the laws of cause and effect apply, where there is *providence, zen, karma, tao, or justice*.

You will also understand the non-aggression principle in terms of Hazlitt's lesson. You will not knowingly seek short-term gratification, at the expense of the long term or at the expense of others, except in defense of yourself, your property, and your kith and kin as they may be unable to do so. You will observe the same constraints regarding the long term. You shall be correct in insisting peacefully that others observe the same consideration toward you, when it is in their power to do so.

### **Radley Balko's Militarized Cops**

I have been a fan of Radley Balko's work since I discovered him at the Cato Institute in 2001. It was about the same time that I read of a family being stopped on an Interstate Highway in Tennessee for some miniscule reason by a state trooper. I had just recently been victimized by a speed trapping trooper near Cumberland Gap, so my ire and my curiosity were piqued. The tragedy that befell this family was that the troopers shot their family dog. I am pretty tender-hearted when it comes to dogs, and I agree with an old friend who says if dogs don't go to heaven, why would we want to go there? The connection is that Radley Balko has made a career of researching, investigating, and reporting wrongdoing on the part of those who should be protecting and serving. I have been reading his reportage from Cato, then Reason, and now at the Huffington Post. He has covered hundreds, maybe thousands, of cases.

So I was very excited when I found an audio version of Radley's new book. I listened every time I went somewhere in my truck, and I just finished yesterday. I have linked the book many times on Facebook, and I published a short review on Goodreads.com. Here are some of my observations:

- We have a very serious and severe problem.
- Scattered stories and anecdotes over the years do not do the problem any sort of justice.
- It takes a book devoted to a broad spectrum of cases and trends to detail the problem.
- It takes libertarians, voluntaryists, and anti-statists reading the book and understanding the depth of the problem.
- There are no reliable statistics about dogs being shot, but the sporadic evidence is that urban cops, as a force, kill at least hundreds in larger cities in a decade.
- There are now way too many documented cases of innocent people being killed and injured in fallout from sloppy investigation.
- There is an almost total disregard in our justice system for holding police responsible for bad police work that ends in wrongful death, injury, or property destruction.
- The fourth amendment is disappearing before our very eyes.
- Politically, this is a non-partisan problem. Politicians of every stripe, including those in the justice system, are giving law enforcement *carte blanche* to pander to voters who are scared silly by the continuing Kabuki theater of terrorism and drugs.
- This mission creep in overdrive is one of the prime examples of our government's attitude, ie. that we will spend, spend, spend until we perish from the Earth ... and Devil take the hindmost.
- Mission creep involves SWAT teams being used to make routine regulatory inspections where licenses and permits are involved – warrantless!
- Even being a member of the government gang does not protect you – see here.

Have you asked yourself why it took around 9,000 minions of state and federal law enforcement to close in on and capture one injured and one not too bright teenager after the Boston Marathon bombing? Our local LEOs have been enticed by the propaganda, high powered armament, and funds provided by the Department of Homeland Security, the Drug Enforcement agencies, and the Pentagon for over a decade. They are addicted to the asset forfeiture teat. The seed was planted in the late 1960s, but the growth has been on pure adrenaline since 9/11/2001.

### **“Private Sector”**

I was listening to a podcast of the lecture series sponsored by the London School of Economics (LSE) when a certain phrase nearly made me jump. The speaker referred to the “pseudo private sector,” referring to mostly monopolies and large public utilities. But I immediately felt a resonance with the larger implications. First of all, there is no private sector; the entities cited are defined by the public (state) sector, in effect they are subsidiaries of the state. If the state did not believe they were beholden to the state, they would have no reference to them. The state only talks about those things it supposes itself to control. The private sector is an euphemism for the outcomes of crony capitalism. The private sector is just another ring of authoritarianism, from which we are told how it's going

to be and that we had better like it or lump it.

There is of course private life, filled with private individuals. All humans are fundamentally voluntary members of free flowing social interaction. But we each have different perceptions, one of the most important being our tolerance for abuse by those who would control us. In the USA, far too many of us tolerate the nearly unbearable tax burden that is thrust upon us. Even worse, corruption, waste, and stupidity have been dumped on us for so long that it seems like a normal thing. In other parts of the world, people will tolerate poverty, hunger, homelessness, hopelessness, pestilence, larceny, and being warred upon for their lifetimes.

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Take control, take voluntary control of your individual existence, of yourself, of your time and space, of your thoughts, of your principles. Then voluntarily admit those others for whom you care. Exclude others who do not and will not see life this way. Understand the simplicity of true economics, and strive to live that way. Be aware that the authoritarians are running amok, they have lost the ability to understand a voluntary life. And most of all, do not allow others to define the view of your life that you maintain with such great effort, that you follow with such great care. Do not tolerate abuse. Live up to your own high expectations.